

Brussels, 1st February 2012

## **OLAF launches new organisation to sharpen its focus and cut the duration of investigations**

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) has today introduced important changes to its organisation and working methods. These changes are the result of an internal review launched in March 2011 by OLAF Director-General Giovanni Kessler who took office on 14 February 2011. The new organisational structure and investigative procedures aim at focusing resources on prioritised activities and increasing the efficiency and quality of OLAF's investigations.

"In times of economic difficulty, the protection of the financial interests of the EU and the activities of OLAF are more important than ever. OLAF is at the frontline in the fight against fraud and corruption, and our high level of ambition reflects the commitment of the EU institutions to address these issues. With the changes, we will shorten the average length of our investigations. The way we chose to open an investigation or not will become more transparent as we make public our investigative priorities. We will put more focus on the most important cases, not least those where the chances of recovering misused EU money are the highest," said OLAF Director-General Giovanni Kessler.

The new organisation and investigative procedures of OLAF take into account opinions expressed by the Court of Auditors, the European Parliament, Member States and other stakeholders. It also takes into consideration important issues raised in the discussions on the reform of OLAF Regulation (EC) No 1073/1999, without pre-empting the results of the ongoing trilogue between the European Parliament, Council and the Commission.

The total number of OLAF staff remains the same in the new organisation, however a shift in resources from non-operational tasks to investigations together with a clearer allocation of responsibilities has increased the number of staff dedicated to investigations by around 30 percent.

The new investigative procedures are simpler, while maintaining high investigative standards and full respect for procedural guarantees. A new unit has been created that will assess all information received by OLAF containing allegations of fraud, and will select new cases according to coherent criteria and within a short timeframe. This will ensure a quick opening of investigations and overall consistency. Priority will be given to important cases where positive results are expected. The new unit will also perform quality and legality checks. The protection of fundamental rights and procedural guarantees will therefore be reinforced, and protection of the identity of sources will be given highest priority.

The anti-fraud policy activities of OLAF will be focused in one directorate. The aim is to improve the support OLAF offers Commission services in the development and implementation of fraud prevention and detection policies, to enhance the support given to Member States notably in the fight against smuggling, and to focus policy development on a number of priority initiatives such as the European Public Prosecutor's Office.

Along with the organisational and procedural changes, OLAF has revamped its website: [http://ec.europa.eu/anti\\_fraud/](http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud/)

## **OLAF**

The mission of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) is threefold: it protects the financial interests of the European Union by combating fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities; it protects the reputation of the European Institutions by investigating serious misconduct by their staff that could result in disciplinary or criminal proceedings; and it supports the European Commission in the development and implementation of fraud prevention and detection policies.

### **For further details:**

Johan WULLT  
Spokesperson (acting)  
European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)  
Phone: +32 2 295 22 10  
E-mail: [olaf-media@ec.europa.eu](mailto:olaf-media@ec.europa.eu)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/anti\\_fraud](http://ec.europa.eu/anti_fraud)